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THE ROYAL RECOVERY:

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S E R M O N,

PREACHED BEFORE

The Right Worshipful the MAYOR,

AND THE

CORPORATION OF BRISTOL,

In ST. MARK'S CHAPEL,

On THURSDAY the 23d of *April* 1789,

THE DAY OF

GENERAL THANKSGIVING.

By JOHN CAMPLIN, D. D.

Vicar of the united Parishes of *St. Nicholas* and *St. Leonard*,

Published at the Request of the Audience.

L O N D O N :

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THE ROYAL RECOVERY

J. F. R. M. O. N.



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S E R M O N, &c.

Isaiah xxxviii. 20.

THE LORD WAS READY TO SAVE ME:
THEREFORE WE WILL SING MY SONGS
TO THE STRINGED INSTRUMENTS ALL
THE DAYS OF OUR LIFE, IN THE HOUSE
OF THE LORD.

A Comparison between Hezekiah King
of Judah and the Sovereign whom
Providence hath placed over this kingdom,
requires no apology on the present solemn

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occasion.

occasion. *"Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning."*

And the examples as well as precepts demand our serious attention, that we may be enabled profitably to avail ourselves of both.

I have no design to prostitute this solemnity to the purpose of royal flattery or political raillery. If our faith and dependence on the mercy and goodness of God may be confirmed and established, and our hearts excited to due expressions of gratitude, the end of the institution will, I apprehend, be fully answered.

We know by experience, as well as by deductions of reason, that the actions of men in eminent stations will have an extensive influence. People of inferior ranks, though not always scrupulous imitators of their virtues, are in general, as far as different circumstances will allow, faithful copyists

copyists of their vices; they are fond of sheltering their enormities under the shadow of a great example, and have a pride as well as complacency in looking up to an illustrious pattern. True rational undissembled piety is the only solid foundation of all real virtue; and therefore the leading feature in the character of every good King must be piety:—by which I do not mean a bigotted attachment to forms and ceremonies, to superstitious and traditional usages, but a piety founded on true religion and uncorrupt reason; whose temple is the heart of man in its state of renovation, whose authority and direction is the gospel of our LORD JESUS CHRIST. All this it must be acknowledged may be feigned and hypocritical: It is the incommunicable prerogative of God alone to penetrate the recesses of the human heart.

But there are certain signs or tokens of true piety which must discover themselves
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in visible actions, in the general conduct of a man's life, and are very competent evidences of the reality of his principles.

The virtues of our gracious Sovereign have not been confined to his regular and devout attendance on the ordinances of religion; which of his actions have not been an uniform and eminent display of them? Neither the tongue of faction, nor the pen of sedition, can justly charge him with any incroachments on the constitutional rights of his subjects, nor with the least act of violence and oppression in the execution of his royal authority.

In the civil department he may confidently demand with the prophet's consciousness of integrity, "*Here I am, witness against me before the Lord, whose ox have I taken? or whose ass have I taken? or whom have I defrauded? whom have I oppressed?*"

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Who can charge me with "*cruelty to the poor, or violent perverting of judgment and justice?*"

In the ecclesiastical establishment there has been no breach, and the liberties of toleration have not been abridged but extended.

In his private and domestic demeanor no character can stand higher; his conjugal attachment, constancy and fidelity, his parental tenderness and affection to a numerous offspring must be the admiration of all, except men of the most loose and abandoned principles; and is a noble pattern not only to his own subjects, but to every crowned head and nation in Europe. Those among us, especially men of distinction, whose own characters are stigmatized and sullied by such a bright example, may endeavor, as many have done, to wipe off the reproach by profane raillery and indecent ridicule; but this will no more remove the foul blot in the estimation

estimation of men of real honor and integrity, or of women of unfulfilled virtue, than it will wipe away their guilt in the sight of a God of knowledge, of justice and of purity. The power resting in Kings of falling into licentiousness, their perfect freedom from all human restraint and controul, with regard to personal indulgencies, their great temptations and frequent opportunities, together with the example of most of their predecessors, are such strong attractives to vice and immorality as men of inferior rank cannot be exposed to. The character of a virtuous King must therefore justly claim much more of our admiration and praise than that of any private person; not only on account of the extensive influence of the great example, but also by reason of the extreme difficulty attendant on the establishment and support of it.

The reason why good men are often permitted to be grievously afflicted, must have

have remained among the unsearchable secrets of God's providence, had not the dispensation of the gospel assured us that human afflictions are no certain mark of divine displeasure; that they are often tokens of God's favor and affection; "*that whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.*" That they are permitted to draw off men's attention from too close a pursuit of the pleasures and enjoyments of this world to the injury of their future and eternal interest; that they are intended as trials of their faith and patience, and for the exercise and improvement of every christian grace; to fix on their minds a deep impress of the uncertainty and transitory nature of all earthly comforts; to quicken the constant remembrance of their own mortality; and of the necessity there is of securing the reversion of "*a better and more enduring substance.*" On these principles there is no difficulty in accounting for the royal suf-
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ferings without charging God foolishly, or depreciating the virtues of our King.

When Hezekiah succeeded to the kingdom of Judah, at the age of five and twenty, he found it involved with profaneness, vice and wickedness; his first care was to correct these enormous evils by "*doing that which was right in the sight of the Lord,*" and by obliging his subjects, as far as his authority and example could extend, to do the same. Nor were these his pious efforts without success; for * "*in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, and in the law, and in the commandments to seek his God, he did it with all his heart, and prospered.—And the Lord hearkened to Hezekiah, and healed the people.*"

The next account we have of Hezekiah after this great reformation is, that "*the King of Assyria came up against all the fenced cities*

* 2 Chron. xxxi. 24, Chap. xxx. 20,

cities of Judah and took them." And that soon after, a very numerous army was sent against Jerusalem, which army was miraculously destroyed in the space of one night. I do not propose to attempt drawing an exact parallel between this King of Judah and the King of Great Britain; the difference of time and place, of religion, laws, constitution and government, must of necessity make a considerable difference in the two portraits; but allowance being made for these, such a striking likeness will appear as may furnish us with something more than amusement in the progress of this enquiry.

Our King by issuing his royal proclamation, and the force of his own example, had made repeated efforts to stem the torrent of vice and immorality, and to encourage and support true religion and virtue. And what followed? Not the advance of a foreign enemy against his cities and pro-

vinces, but the revolt of his own subjects, "*whose country had always been nourished by the King's country.*" Whether this seeming loss may not eventually be a matter of gain, and the defection of the revolters carry its own punishment with it to themselves, a little longer time will pretty clearly discover. Encouraged by this success the great powers of Europe, like the enemies of Hezekiah against Jerusalem, combined against this threatened country to effect its utter ruin and destruction; which was preserved, not indeed by the miraculous interposition of an angel, but by the wonderful interposition of Providence against the probability of human power and human achievements.

The next occurrence we read in the history of Hezekiah, after the signal deliverance from his formidable enemies, is that he was seized with a dangerous sickness, which threatened his immediate dissolution. His prayers,

prayers, tears and humiliation, the visit of the prophet, and the application of a remedy concurred in effecting his recovery.

There were many circumstances in this event not dissimilar to those which attended the late malady of our afflicted Sovereign. He had lived to see his numerous and powerful enemies at peace with him; the trade and commerce of the nation revived and flourishing; the finances improved, the load of debt lessening, and the people in general easy and happy; when in the midst of these enjoyments it pleased God to smite him with such a disorder as was terrible in its approach, distressing in its continuance, doubtful as to its event. We can scarce believe that his melancholy situation permitted him to pray for himself, but he was restored to the fervent and effectual prayers of his loyal and affectionate subjects, at a crisis which put a happy

happy period to much warm political contention, and preserved the peace and tranquility of an alarmed, anxious, disturbed nation.

But the most striking likeness in the two characters under our consideration is the pious gratitude with which they both received the signal deliverance at the hands of God, and their exemplary mode of expressing it.

Hezekiah on his recovery breaks forth into this rapturous exclamation, * "*The grave cannot praise thee, death cannot celebrate thee; the living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day; the father to the children shall make known thy truth. The Lord was ready to save me: therefore we will sing my songs, all the days of our life in the house of the Lord.*" My thanksgiving shall be as
' public as my deliverance, and the con-
' tinuance

* Isaiah xxxviii. 18, 19, 20.

‘tinuance of it of the same duration with my
‘existence.’

In like manner our truly religious King embraced with eagerness the first opportunity after his restoration, of pouring out his soul to the God of his salvation, and declared with David’s triumph, “*I was glad when they said unto me, we will go into the house of the Lord.*” Nor have we heard that the fervency of his zeal is abated, or that he hath missed any opportunity since of repeating the like grateful acknowledgments.

The appointment of this day’s solemnity was the earnest desire of his own heart; and though discouraged at first by his trusty counsellors for reasons of prudence and caution, he persevered in his design, his motives were urgent, and his resolution unalterable. We do not presume to dive into the secrets of the Royal breast; but
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we may fairly draw conclusions in any man's favor or disfavor by the drift of his conversation, and the whole tenor of his conduct. From what has transpired we have good reason to believe that pomp and parade were not the leading ideas which influenced the King's design; indeed he wished to have it avoided as much as was consistent with the nature of such a procession. His attention seemed fixed on the great object of his reverence and affection, and therefore not likely to be much affected by inferior attractions; his heart was too much enlarged to vent the overflowings of its gratitude in secret; his deliverance was of too public importance to be confined to the tribute of private ejaculations; the people had been acquainted with his distress, and it was meet and right that they should be both the witnesses and partakers of his joy; with so much propriety and unaffected zeal did he adopt David's sentiments and language,

" I will

"I will give thee thanks in the great congregation, I will praise thee among much people."

By an elevated meditation on the Majesty of his deliverer his ideas were exalted above the common measure of earthly objects. — This led to the choice of the most magnificent temple in his dominions for the scene of his adoration. The offerings of a liberal giver are suited as much as possible to the dignity of the receiver. However distant the analogy, we can conceive no better representation of the throne of God than the most sumptuous erections of human device and ingenuity, and this accounts for the immense sums which have been laid out in different places in building Christian churches by men actuated by the love of their Redeemer; and endeavoring to form some faint conception of "*the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity.*"

The choice of so conspicuous a day for laying the foundation of a new church

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in this city does credit to the attention of the projectors; and their countenance and liberal grant redounds to the honor of its patrons.*

The declaration of David is the sentiment of liberality and gratitude, founded on a true sense of religion, "*I will offer no offerings unto the Lord my God of that which doth cost me nothing.*" He was the original proprietor and is now the Lord paramount of all your possessions; justice, gratitude and interest combine in obliging every man of prudence to renew his tenure, and strengthen his title by an adequate tribute to his Lord's honor and service.

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* The Mayor and Sheriffs, attended by the Corporation in their formalities, and the parochial Commissioners, went this morning in solemn procession, and laid the foundation-stone of a new Church, intended to be dedicated to St. Paul.

These circumstances have all their proper weight in this day's solemnity. The people in general united in their prayers for, because they were so much interested in, the King's recovery; and he now calls on us in the spirit of true devotion, "*O praise the Lord with me, and let us magnify his name together.*" An awful reflection on the tremendous Majesty of the object of this praise will convince all sober men of the absurdity and impiety of expressing their thankfulness on this occasion by noise, riot and intemperance; which it is devoutly to be wished will be most cautiously avoided. The silent, slow, solemn procession of our Sovereign from his palace to his capital, the great number and respectability of his attendants, the decency, piety, and rationality of the divine worship to be performed in that stately structure, dedicated to God's honor and service, must make a deep and lasting impression on the minds of all the beholders; and fill

the foreign spectators (of whom no doubt many will be present) with profound admiration of the dignity and grandeur, the loyalty and liberality of the English nation.

Having indulged myself in this pleasing speculation, I cannot conclude without an earnest desire that the many useful lessons suggested by this solemnity may not pass without a due and practical application.

The severe affliction with which it pleased God to visit our King, and the painful solicitation, and pungent grief suffered by his gracious consort in consequence thereof, is a matter of deep humiliation to every person among us, whatever his rank, station or dignity may be, and instructs the most distinguished personages in very legible characters, "*that neither the splendor of any thing that is great,*
nor

nor the conceit of any thing that is good in them," should withdraw their eyes from looking on themselves as exposed and liable to all the miseries of mortality ; and be a perpetual monitor to them not to be "*high-minded, but to fear.*" For if God spared not our much-beloved Sovereign, excelling in virtue, and loaded with honors, to what earthly being may not this friendly caution be applied, "*take heed lest he spare not thee !*"

The gracious answer given to the earnest supplications of an anxious people, should convince those who find themselves on any occasion disinclined to the performance of this duty, that our God is a God who heareth prayer ; and that whenever the matter of our petitions is suited to his wisdom, and to our real necessities, we may, and ought to have recourse with confidence to the mercy seat.

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The very critical time at which the deliverance was vouchsafed, points out also to us in a clear light the kind and certain interference of his good providence in our greatest exigencies, and teaches us the infinite advantage of placing our persons and our concerns under the direction and management of so wise, so gracious and so powerful a Governor. "*Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thy judgments are made manifest. Great and marvellous are thy works, O Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways thou King of Saints.*"

Our estimation of every temporal blessing is greatly enhanced by any present danger of losing it. Never was our King so admired, so beloved, so praised, and so prayed for, as when we were deprived of his presence, and of the exercise of his royal authority; if any person's zeal and affections grow cool on his recovery, it
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will not redound much to the credit of his sincerity before God or man. It is to be hoped that the overflowings of this day's thanksgiving will be succeeded by the silent and more permanent stream of piety and reverence to God, of loyalty and obedience to the King, of unity and concord among ourselves, "*that we may lead quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty;*" that the government may sit light on his shoulders, and the crown flourish on his head.

I should be very sorry to throw any unseasonable gloom on your joy and mirth on this day of public rejoicing; but I wish to place it on such a rational, solid, and lasting foundation that you may "*rejoice ever more.*" It will not I trust appear strange or overstrained when I declare to you (and I shall try your patience no longer) that the contemplation of the amazing multitude this day assembled in
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every part of this populous kingdom, to celebrate the praises of their God, and the safety of their King, hath impressed my mind with a lively imagination of "*that great voice of much people heard in heaven, saying, Alleluia! Salvation, and glory, and honor, and power, unto the Lord our God. — And again they said, Alleluia! Alleluia! for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.*" Rev. 19.

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